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For Immediate Release
July 25, 2007

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HOUSTON BUSINESS OWNER SENTENCED FOR HARBORING ILLEGAL ALIENS

Defendant ordered to pay fine of \$25,000

Alexandria, Louisiana . . . ARTURO IBARRA-GAMEZ, age 38, of Houston, Texas, was sentenced on July 20, 2007 by United States District Judge Dee Drell **to spend 22 months in prison**, followed by three years of supervised release, for harboring illegal aliens, employing unauthorized aliens and improper entry of an alien, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced. **Judge Drell ordered IBARRA-GAMEZ not to return to the United States following his release from prison without approval from the United States Secretary of Homeland Security. IBARRA-GAMEZ was also ordered to pay a fine of \$25,000.** Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

IBARRA-GAMEZ was indicted in June 2006 and charged with one count of harboring aliens, one count of improper entry by an alien, and one count of unlawful hiring of aliens after an investigation by U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Lafayette, Louisiana. Their investigation revealed that IBARRA-GAMEZ was an undocumented alien who owned Art's Construction based in

Houston, Texas, which employed approximately 30 to 40 workers. In March 2006, ICE identified approximately 11 Art's Construction employees as illegal aliens working at a railroad tank car facility in Alexandria, Louisiana. Their investigation further revealed that these illegal aliens were working under a contract with a construction firm based in Alexandria.

In May 2006, ICE learned that through a contract with the same construction firm based in Alexandria, Art's Construction sent more illegal aliens to a work site and these illegal aliens were accessing an airbase and Louisiana National Guard facility under a Federal Emergency Management Administration construction contract.

IBARRA-GAMEZ plead guilty to all counts in the indictment on March 26, 2007.

U.S. Attorney Washington stated: "This office and other federal agencies will continue to aggressively pursue those who harbor illegal aliens as well as those who seek to unlawfully hire aliens for employment within this district. Harboring an illegal alien includes those day-to-day kinds of activities, including employment, that facilitate an illegal alien's continued and unlawful stay in the United States."

This case was investigated by the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Lafayette Resident Agency, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney James T. McManus.

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